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**LRSC biennial budget themes for 2005–2007**

At meetings earlier this year with Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) leadership, members of the Local Roads and Streets Council (LRSC) asked how the Council could be most effective and proactive during the upcoming state biennial budget process. Based on conversations with WisDOT Executive Assistant Randy Romanski, the Council developed five key themes to increase awareness and educate legislators, local associations and others on local transportation issues. The five 2005–2007 Biennial Budget themes developed by the Council include:

- Local Transportation Financing (Local roads are a good investment)
- State Highway Maintenance (Why it's important to locals)
- Role of WISLR/Pavement Rating (How can this data assist locals?)
- DNR/DOT Proposal (Environmental streamlining)
- Education and Outreach (Coordinate themes/messages for local associations, legislature, and others)

Wisconsin's Local Roads System

Growth in vehicle miles traveled and the number of growing communities across the state reflect the additional demand being placed on our local road network. A growing service economy and increased suburb-to-suburb commuting for work, school and appointments further the reliance on local road travel. This demand on the local system primarily manifests itself in the accelerated deterioration of the local highway system.

Because our state has such an extensive local road network—which supports our manufacturing, agricultural and tourism economies—the state and local governments must commit large amounts

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*Frank Busalacchi, Secretary,
Wisconsin Department
of Transportation*

**Message from
WisDOT Secretary
Frank Busalacchi**

Public safety is the common thread woven through virtually all our department's initiatives. No matter what transportation mode people choose, our department is likely involved in construction and educational efforts focused on keeping people safe. For example, we participate in informational seminars for pilots, support safety programs aimed at motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians, and actively support "Operation Lifesaver," designed to reduce crashes at rail crossings. From an engineering perspective, we promote transportation facilities that are not only functional and long lasting, but also safe. With the cooperation and support we receive from groups like the Local Roads and Streets Council (LRSC) and our many other local, state and federal partners, we will continue to emphasize the life-saving safety messages that impact nearly everything we do.

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*Don Kush, Council Chair, Senior
Planner, West Central Wisconsin
Regional Planning Commission*

**Message from
Council Chair
Don Kush**

Over the past two years, the LRSC's Regulatory, Environmental and Legislative (REAL) Committee has been working cooperatively with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) on a proposal to improve the environmental review process and increase the effectiveness of oversight of local transportation projects. This proposal is in keeping with Governor Jim Doyle's priority for more efficient government and will improve state agency service to local government while leading to new initiatives for better environmental results for municipal transportation improvement projects. Both WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi and DNR Secretary Scott Hassett have supported the development of this proposal and have invested staff resources toward this effort.

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of resources to maintain and improve that network. In fact, local road improvement and maintenance is one of the largest components of city and town budgets. Without that support, many communities would not be able to provide the level of service that residents and businesses have come to expect and rely upon.

Local Transportation Financing (Local roads are a good investment)

Local roads and streets are a critical component of Wisconsin's transportation system and play a key role in the economic vitality of the state. This 100,000-mile statewide network ensures that employees get to work on time, students get to school safely, and businesses get products to market. For most business and personal vehicle travel, the local road system represents the first and last leg of the trip. Businesses often select locations based on the quality of the transportation system. Quality in one part of the system cannot overcome inadequacies in other parts. Increased use, aging and growth of Wisconsin's local road system require continued investment to maintain and preserve the current level of service. Wisconsin is among the top three states in the country in terms of total miles of paved roads, and in the top five for total local road miles. The sheer size of the system means significant resources are required to preserve it. In addition, states in the northern portion of the country have additional demands placed on their road systems due to seasonal changes. These factors, combined with the extensive demand placed on the local system by increased traffic and commerce, result in local road investments being a critical aspect of the Wisconsin economy.

Like many state programs, transportation resources are under tremendous pressure. Funding levels for state shared revenues to local governments were reduced in the 2003–2005 state biennial budget. General Transportation Aids (GTA)—the largest WisDOT program related to local road funding, which reimburses local governments for activities like road construction, patching, and plowing—have been frozen at 2003 levels for the next two years. And the Local



Roads Improvement Program (LRIP), currently funded at \$23 million annually, is not able to meet existing needs. Another revenue source for local transportation projects, the state and local property tax, has reached its peak and is a source of constant political debate. While state transportation budgets remain relatively flat, cost increases for materials, labor, and inflation continue to erode program purchasing power.

The LRSC plays a unique role in its ability to develop companion pieces to various studies and reports that only tell “part of the story,” or are used to make cases against resource investment in the improvement, preservation and maintenance of the local roads system.

State Highway Maintenance (Why it's important to locals)

Wisconsin is the only state that does not have a state-level maintenance department. Currently, counties, cities and villages bear the burden with the county employees directly responsible for the supervision and maintenance of the state trunk highway (STH) system. The state/county approach to STH maintenance is a national model for integrated cooperation and has been tremendously successful. Consolidation of services and inter-governmental cooperation are keys to lowering costs to the taxpayers and improving governmental efficiency.

Maintenance is defined as any work necessary to keep a highway structure in its original configuration, and to protect it from premature deterioration. Highway maintenance is extremely important to the safety of all who travel on Wisconsin's highways and should be a top priority, however, this isn't reflected in the funding allocated to counties for this purpose which is consistently flat, or on the decline. Many feel that there has been no attempt to reach “level of service” budgetary levels, and that funding is not accommodating system growth or “service-level creep.”

Wisconsin faces challenges when it comes to funding highway maintenance. In the biennial budget, Gov. Jim Doyle proposed an inflationary increase in maintenance funds for 2003–2005, but this increase was eliminated during the legislative process. In total, the Governor's proposal for maintenance was cut by over \$33 million. In addition, the flexibility to move funds between the highway improvement program and maintenance account was eliminated.

What does this mean for Wisconsin? It leaves us with lower service-levels, more roads to maintain with less money, and a perceived feeling of uncertainty by decision makers. Counties see this as a step toward the deterioration of our STH

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system, and the knowledge that they will have to continue to answer for the declining service levels. Local governments ask, “Why keep building new roads if you aren’t going to maintain them?”

Role of WISLR/Pavement Rating (How can this data assist locals?)

The Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) is gathering valuable data that will help quantify and prioritize work on the local highway system. The data will provide an assessment of the local road conditions and help determine the level of investment required to preserve and maintain them.

Local cooperation to biennially submit pavement condition data to WisDOT has been outstanding. About 94% of local communities have complied with the December 2003 deadline to provide road condition data. Compiling the road data from 1,922 local units of government has been a long and challenging process. Enhanced system functionality should be available to our local partners later this year. WISLR benefits include:

- Greater accountability by local governments;
- Capability to monitor trends in system performance;
- Allow comparison of the impact of funding to system performance;
- Determination of local pavement needs/corresponding best management practices; and
- Determination of appropriate levels of service tied to GTA funding.

DNR/DOT Proposal (Environmental streamlining)

Over the past two years, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), WisDOT and the LRSC’s Regulatory, Environmental and Legislative (REAL) Committee have worked on a proposal to improve the environmental review process and increase the effectiveness of oversight of local transportation projects.

In keeping with Governor Jim Doyle’s priority for more efficient government, the proposal will improve state agency service to local governments, while leading to new initiatives for better environmental

results with municipal and county transportation improvement projects.

Wisconsin needs a DOT/DNR/Local agreement to regulate reform for local transportation projects. The proposal is a good example of government working cooperatively—instead of as adversaries—and is consistent with other statewide reforms and streamlining efforts. It’s good for the environment, local transportation and taxpayers. It is also an excellent opportunity for WisDOT to show leadership on local issues such as “transportation” and the “environment.”

Education and Outreach (Coordinate themes/messages for local associations, Legislature, and others)

The education and outreach component is intended to coordinate the information gathered and general approach of the LRSC with local transportation funding in the next biennium. The goal is to compare the calendar for the state biennial budget process with the calendars of the various statewide local associations as they determine their legislative priorities for the coming year.

For example, if the LRSC recommends an amendment to Wisconsin law that provides a definition of GTA or a specific level of funding, the council would meet with the executive leadership of the Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA), League of Wisconsin Municipalities (LWM), Wisconsin Alliance of Cities

(WAC) and the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA). Key LRSC representatives from each respective association would attend these meetings to address the Council’s issues regarding GTA and local accountability, and request how the association can work these into their legislative priority process. Council members representing their local associations or working with their respective leadership would then seek a resolution to be adopted at their fall conference or board meeting, stating a position on the issue. This then becomes part of the legislative agenda for the local associations.

As a companion process, the LRSC themes may be taken to the Wisconsin chapters of the American Public Works Association (APWA) and the American Planning Association (APA) for their endorsement. Depending on how the issues develop, it may also be helpful for LRSC members to speak with other transportation groups.

To assist in accomplishing these goals, specific education and outreach products include:

- Updated LRSC Brochure;
- Updated GTA Brochure;
- Education pieces summarizing each of the budget themes; and
- Companion white papers to provide greater detail if needed. ▲



Hazard Elimination Safety (HES) Program continues to fund safety improvement projects

The Hazard Elimination Safety (HES) Program is part of the overall Highway Safety Improvement Program, which has a long history dating back to the 1970s. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) uses the federal-aid funds provided by federal law to design and implement safety improvement projects on the state trunk highway (STH) and local systems. The overall objective of the HES Program is to develop and implement, on a continuing basis, safety projects designed to reduce the number and severity of crashes on all highways. "All highways" means that all state (including Interstate) and local highways and roads systems are eligible for hazard elimination projects.

With passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), and continuing under current law with the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), an increased emphasis was placed on safety improvements by requiring 10% of a state's Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds be spent on HES and rail-safety projects. In TEA-21, this amounts to about \$10.9 million (including optional safety funds) in federal funds being available annually for the HES Program. TEA-21 ran through 2003 and a new federal authorization act has not been passed as of this writing. No one knows what the next federal authorization act amount for safety will be, but for programming purposes, WisDOT is assuming that 2003 program levels will continue in 2004 and beyond.

WisDOT chooses to fund HES projects at the normal matching level established in TEA-21 of 90% federal/10% state or local funds. However, funding caps are routinely established for all new projects over \$200,000 and all existing projects once they escalate to over \$200,000. Requests to increase these funding caps will be considered and approved depending on the safety benefits estimated for the project. Also, to insure a better geographic distribution of projects and to improve the ability of local units of government to compete for projects, a maximum project size limit of \$750,000 has been established. Projects over \$750,000 must have a companion



project of equal size, funded from other sources, before any additional HES funds will be approved for the project.

Hazard elimination projects are intended to employ relatively inexpensive countermeasures to correct hazardous site-specific safety concerns. Typical eligible projects are:

- Install/modify traffic signals;
- Install signs, delineators, flashing warning lights;
- Straighten isolated curves or hills;
- Improve sight distance;
- Construct turning, bypass or other auxiliary lanes;
- Access modifications;
- Intersection channelization/turning radii improvements; and
- Install guardrail.

Only projects that have an actual crash history are funded at this time. There are many sites throughout the state that have an actual crash history, and WisDOT has given them priority for the limited HES funds over sites that only have "crash potential." All candidate projects must have a favorable Project Evaluation Factor (similar to a benefit/cost calculation using crash history information and the anticipated cost of the improvement).

To provide adequate time for project planning and development, the HES Program spans four years.

The standard HES Program operates on a two-year cycle, with all HES projects (state and local) being solicited every odd-numbered year at the same time.

The next cycle for soliciting candidate HES projects for the 2006–2009 period is scheduled to begin February 1, 2005.

This schedule, however, is dependent on passage of a new federal aid highway act, along with the ability for WisDOT to digest the law's safety elements and make appropriate adjustments to the Safety Improvement Programming Guidelines. These current unknowns could potentially delay the start of the next cycle. Interim project submittals will be considered on a case-by-case basis for exceptionally urgent projects.

There are various sources that may be used in searching out candidate projects, including:

1. Copies of crash reports (MV4000) that are available from the Safety Section of WisDOT's Bureau of Highway Operations (BHO), or from local enforcement agencies. At least three years of data should be used when analyzing candidate HES projects.
2. A listing of crash locations for the last three years that can be produced by the WisDOT Central Office Safety Section or district offices. These can be provided to County Traffic Safety Commissions, directors of public works, county highway commissioners, or the local, city or village engineers. These crash listings will help in problem identification.

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Secretary's Message

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Perhaps most visible are our many efforts to promote highway safety. Recently, our department's Bureau of Transportation Safety (BOTS) was placed under the organizational "umbrella" of the State Patrol, in part to more clearly recognize the important link between education and law enforcement. Utilizing a combination of communication strategies supported by law enforcement activities, our department continues to stress the need for all drivers and passengers to obey speed limits, wear safety belts, never drive impaired, and be especially watchful in construction zones. We participate in a variety of educational campaigns to raise public awareness on these and other issues.

Just as the orange barrels started to roll out this construction season, Governor Jim Doyle proclaimed April 4–10 as "Work Zone Awareness Week" in Wisconsin. The goal was to highlight the ongoing need to protect motorists traveling through work zones, along with the people who work in them. Last year, 12 people lost their lives and another 944 were injured in Wisconsin work zone crashes. While we're all concerned about the well being of construction workers, it's important to keep in mind the fact that most work zone deaths and injuries involve motorists. As motorists enter any of the many highway construction zones throughout the state, they are asked to remain alert for sudden stops, slow-downs, and be on the lookout for our private contractor partners. Motorists are also reminded that traffic fines are double in work zones.

On Memorial Day, the Wisconsin State Patrol along with law enforcement agencies around the state initiated a comprehensive

safety belt crackdown and education campaign aimed at saving lives. Called *BUSTED: Buckle-Up or Pay the Price* the campaign involved a federally funded broadcast and print public education media blitz combined with intensive law enforcement. Over the three-day Memorial Day weekend alone, troopers issued 2,157 safety belt citations, more than double the citations issued during the same three-day holiday period a year ago. Troopers also issued 2,096 citations for speeding, made 93 arrests for operating while intoxicated, issued 82 citations for child restraint violations and assisted 754 motorists. And the focused public education and law enforcement efforts seem to have paid off. Although nine people lost their lives in Memorial Day weekend traffic crashes in Wisconsin this year, that's significantly lower than the 15 traffic deaths that occurred over the same three-day period in 2003. Preliminary reports indicate seven motorists died over the recent three-day July Fourth weekend compared to 12 who were killed during the same period a year ago—making the 2004 July Fourth holiday period among the safest on record. This is further evidence that education combined with enforcement can be a recipe for success when it comes to slowing down and protecting motorists.

Despite these comprehensive outreach efforts, too many people still do not heed our safety messages. We need only look to last year when a total of 836 people lost their lives in Wisconsin traffic crashes—the highest fatality total in over 20 years. Combined with the emotional distress surviving family members must endure, this annual toll of human lives is simply unacceptable. On an encouraging note, so far this year we've noted a significant drop in traffic fatalities. The wet spring weather in many parts of the state may have been a factor in slowing motorists down. Also, we believe our investments in educational and law enforcement initiatives are paying dividends in the form of lives saved.

We all play an important and active role in promoting highway safety simply by leading by example. Along with obeying traffic laws, this means always wearing a safety belt and urging others in our vehicle to do the same. Our bottom line message to all vehicle operators is that when you get behind the wheel—whether it be a car or truck, an airplane, a bicycle or a boat—your fate, the fate of your passengers and

others around you—is literally in your hands. As a society, we all benefit from safe travel. But it's up to each of us as drivers and passengers to take matters into our own hands and ensure we reach our destinations safely. As our fellow transportation "ambassadors," we appreciate the support we receive from the Local Roads and Streets Council and our many other partners in helping us reinforce the "safety" message. Have a safe and enjoyable summer. ▲

Hazard Elimination Safety (HES) Program

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3. County Traffic Safety Commission recommendations and/or other local input for both state and local highways.
4. A specialized inventory with crash history information at STH intersections, based on a certain number of crashes, which has been developed and used by some Districts.

WisDOT has HES Coordinators in each district office to aid in identifying viable candidate projects and preparing submittal packages. They are listed below with their phone numbers.

District #1: Madison
Michelle Ellias, (608) 245-2675

District #2: Waukesha
Anita Pusch, (262) 548-8789

District #3: Green Bay
Cindy O'Connor, (920) 492-5679

District #4: Wisconsin Rapids
Nichole Lysne, (715) 421-8040

District #5: La Crosse
Rick Vydral, (608) 789-7869

District #6: Eau Claire
Greg Helgeson, (715) 836-2980

District #7: Rhinelander
Joe Benbenek, (715) 365-5714

District #8: Superior
Anna Davey, (715) 392-7960

For additional program information, please contact statewide program manager Chuck Thiede at (608) 266-3341, or via e-mail at charles.thiede@dot.state.wi.us

For crash data, please contact Dick Lange from WisDOT's Safety Section in the Bureau of Highway Operations at (608) 266-1620, or via e-mail at richard.lange@dot.state.wi.us ▲

Brighter pavement markings, larger and brighter signs on their way!

This spring, local units of government throughout Wisconsin were notified of the opportunity to apply for state funds under the new Traffic Signing and Marking Enhancement Grants Program. This program was included in legislation that Governor Jim Doyle signed into law last July, and is intended to enhance the visibility of traffic signs and roadway markings on Wisconsin's local road system in an effort to assist older drivers and pedestrians. The \$2.2 million funding of this program for 2004 occurred with the passage of the .08 blood alcohol concentration (BAC) legislation, and went into effect on September 30, 2003.

For this cycle, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) received a total of 69 applications, totaling over \$2.6 million in requests. Project requests are capped at 75% of project costs at the time of application, and local units of government are responsible for the remainder. Communities complete the project, and are reimbursed upon completion. On July 9th, a WisDOT selection committee, made up of a statewide, interdisciplinary team of department representatives, carefully reviewed each application. The committee will forward a list of recommended projects to the secretary for approval in early August and the department will announce the approved projects in September, so stay tuned!

If you have any questions, you can contact Michael Erickson, Program Manager at (608)266-0194 or by e-mail at michael.erickson

Look for information about WISLR training in the future LRSC newsletters.

People interested in obtaining training information as it becomes available are encouraged to send an e-mail using the following link: wislrinfo@dot.state.wi.us

Council Chair's message

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The key to the success of this proposal is the single point of contact approach by which both the DNR and WisDOT would identify a "Local Transportation Liaison" in each service area or district. This local transportation liaison would be the person responsible for coordinating their respective agency's required engineering and environmental compliance reviews and permitting of local transportation projects on the existing local road system. The liaison will have the ability to call on special expertise where it may be necessary for more complicated projects, as well as to expedite the permitting of a simplified project that may only require the application of best management practices.

The intended outcome of this proposed streamlining initiative is to consolidate the currently fragmented permitting process for local transportation projects, resulting in cost savings in both personnel time and project cost. In addition, a single point of contact for local government officials will help foster the development of positive relationships in a sometimes confusing regulatory process. Improving these relationships will lead to improved compliance with the environmental regulations required for local transportation projects.

A significant portion of the staffing requirements contained in the proposal can be met through the reallocation of existing DNR staff time involved in the environmental review process for local road projects. However, some additional staffing will be required to provide adequate statewide coverage. The REAL Committee, WisDOT, and DNR are currently investigating funding mechanisms to support the implementation of this proposal.

While the hurdles to secure implementation funding for this proposal may appear difficult, maintaining the status quo is not a sound fiscal or environmental choice for Wisconsin. The current state of environmental reviews and local transportation projects indicates a need for change in the existing system. Delays in needed local transportation improvement projects and their attendant environmental compliance reviews will increase the cost of those projects, while projects that may be implemented without the appropriate environmental oversight may negatively impact environmental resources. That is why this investment can yield such large dividends to both state and local governments. Implementing this proposal will be a significant step in not only promoting a more efficient government, but also in improving state agency service to local government. ▲





Computer and Web Based Training currently in development

How do you effectively and inexpensively address training needs for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) for some 1,900 communities statewide? One solution is to offer Computer Based Training (CBT) on compact disc (CD), or Web Based Training (WBT) accessible online in WISLR, in addition to face-to-face training. WisDOT is currently developing CBT and WBT for WISLR users.

What is CBT/WBT?

Interactive training using a computer, via the Internet or on compact disc (CD).

Benefits:

- Makes learning easy and interesting;
- Users can access training and repeat it on demand;
- As staff positions turn over, new users can get up-to-speed quickly; and
- Modules are easy to update with new functionality to keep users current.

Simulations:

Not only do many of the training topics give details about what is available in WISLR, but the modules also demonstrate how easy WISLR is to use by simulating WISLR screens, maps, and reports—including brief, helpful explanations.

Pavement rating submittals

Every two years, Wisconsin counties, cities, villages, and towns are required to submit pavement ratings to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Pavement rating data is then loaded into WISLR for use by local units of government and the state. Statistics for pavement rating submittals for 2003 (as of May 2004) are as follows:

- Percentage of municipalities who submitted ratings: 94%
- Total number of municipalities who did not submit ratings: 113
- Percentage of submittals now loaded in WISLR: 92%
- Percentage of road miles successfully loaded: 76% 🌟



Calendar of events

Below are meetings and training events related to the local road network in Wisconsin. Please submit events for inclusion in future LRSC newsletters to lrsc@dot.state.wi.us

Local Roads and Streets Council meetings are

held every other month in the city council chambers in Wisconsin Rapids beginning at 9 a.m. The remaining 2004 schedule includes meetings on September 23 and December 2. Interested people are invited to attend council meetings. Various LRSC Committee meetings are also typically held every other month in locations around the state. Please contact WisDOT's Kathryn Andren at kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us or (608) 267-0448 to confirm meeting dates and times.

September 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21 & 22, 2004: One-day Winter Road Maintenance workshops provided by the University of Wisconsin Transportation Information Center (UW-TIC) at seven sites across the state. Please contact the UW-TIC at (800) 442-4615 for questions and registration or go to their Web site at <http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/workshops.lasso>

September 26–28, 2004: Wisconsin Counties Association 66th Annual Conference, Midwest Airlines Center, Milwaukee. Please contact WCA at (608) 663-7188 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.wicounties.org>

October 3–5, 2004: Wisconsin Towns Association Annual Statewide Convention, Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton. Please contact WTA at (715) 526-3157 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.wiscetowns.com>

October 27–29, 2004: League of Wisconsin Municipalities 106th Annual Conference, Radisson Hotel, La Crosse. Please contact the league at (608) 267-2380 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.lwm-info.org>

November 3–5, 2004: American Public Works Association, Wisconsin Chapter Fall Conference, Fond du Lac. Please contact Mark Lentz at (920) 929-3343 or mlentz@ci.fond-du-lac.wi.us for questions or go to the APWA Web site for the Wisconsin chapter at <http://www.wisconsin.apwa.net>

Questions

E-mail the council with your questions at lrsc@dot.state.wi.us, or contact either: Don Kush, Council Chair, (715) 836-2918, dkush@wcwrpc.org or Mary Forlenza, WisDOT Staff Chair, (608) 264-8724, mary.forlenza@dot.state.wi.us

Electronic newsletter

The Local Roads and Streets Council newsletter is available exclusively in an electronic format. The newsletter is sent via e-mail to the addresses we have on file in our newsletter distribution list. The newsletter is also available on the WisDOT Web site at <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/lrsc/newsletters.htm>. Copies of previous newsletters are also available on the Internet at the same address. To add or change e-mail addresses in the newsletter distribution list, please contact the LRSC via e-mail at lrsc@dot.state.wi.us, or contact WisDOT's Kathryn Andren at kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us or (608) 267-0448